

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1213

As Passed House:
February 18, 2013

Title: An act relating to social worker licensing.

Brief Description: Concerning social worker licensing.

Sponsors: Representatives Orwall, Pettigrew, Kagi, Morrell and Ryu.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Health Care & Wellness: 2/1/13, 2/8/13 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/18/13, 96-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Expands the types of health professions that may supervise advanced social workers when performing psychotherapy.
- Extends the number of times that an associate-level license for social workers, marriage and family therapists, and mental health counselors may be renewed from four to six.
- Requires associate-level social workers to comply with suicide assessment, treatment, and management training requirements.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE & WELLNESS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 16 members: Representatives Cody, Chair; Jinkins, Vice Chair; Schmick, Ranking Minority Member; Hope, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Angel, Clibborn, Green, Harris, Manweller, Moeller, Morrell, Riccelli, Ross, Short, Tharinger and Van De Wege.

Staff: Chris Blake (786-7392).

Background:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The Department of Health (Department) licenses two types of social workers: independent clinical social workers and advanced social workers. Advanced social workers apply social work theory and methods including emotional assessment, supervised psychotherapy, case management, consultation, advocacy, counseling, or community organization. Independent clinical social workers diagnose and treat emotional and mental disorders based on knowledge of human development, cause and treatment of psychopathology, psychotherapy treatment, and social work practice. Both categories of social workers must have graduated from a master's or doctorate level program in social work education, passed an examination, completed a supervised experience requirement, and completed continuing education requirements.

In addition to fully licensed professionals, the Department licenses associate-level social workers, marriage and family therapists, and mental health counselors. These individuals must have graduated from an educational program in their field and declare that they are working toward a full license. Associates must work under the supervision of an approved supervisor. The associate license may be renewed up to four times.

Summary of Bill:

Legislative findings are made that advanced social workers and independent clinical social workers both represent the highest level of practice within the social work profession.

The categories of health professions that may supervise an advanced social worker when performing psychotherapy is expanded from only independent clinical social workers, to also include psychiatrists, psychologists, psychiatric advanced registered nurse practitioners, psychiatric nurses, and other mental health professionals as established in rule by the Secretary of Health (Secretary).

The requirement that applicants for an independent clinical social worker license complete 4,000 hours of supervised experience over a three-year period is extended to allow the hours to be completed over a period of not less than three years.

Applications for a license as a social worker, marriage and family therapist, or mental health counselor must be considered under the applicable regulations in effect at the time that a completed application is submitted to the Department of Health. Subsequently adopted regulations may not be the basis for denying an application.

The number of times that an associate level license for social workers, marriage and family therapists, or mental health counselors may be renewed is increased from four times to six. The renewal of an associate-level license is contingent upon the applicant having completed 18 hours of continuing education in the prior year. From 2014 until 2020, the Secretary must annually report to the appropriate committees of the Legislature regarding the number of associate licenses that have been renewed either four, five, or six times.

Associate-level social workers must comply with suicide assessment, treatment, and management training requirements.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill is a way to support students as they work toward licensure as a social worker. Many associate social workers trying to work toward licensure are finding that it is taking them longer to get full licensure because they are working part-time or unable to afford supervision outside of their employers. This bill cleans up language. The study in the bill will inform people of who is working full-time, part-time, and through externships, as well as how much is being paid out-of-pocket for supervision. Supervision ranges from \$125 to \$250 per hour and this makes it harder to get licensed. Allowing people to get hours while volunteering will reduce the cost to the associate and benefit many community agencies.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Orwall, prime sponsor; Ann Allen, National Association of Social Workers; Laura Groshong, Washington State Society for Clinical Social Workers; and Keonna Moffett.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.